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The Role of the Missionary in Latin America Today



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Introduction

It is pretentious to deal with the role of the missionary in Latin America today in three lectures. The topic is vast and complicated. The twenty Latin American republics, while sharing a common culture and a parallel history, have their own peculiar characteristics. The development of the Protestant Churches in these countries has been different both in character and in rapidity. In these talks we shall attempt to recall much of what is commonplace and try to set our present role within the context of our Christian Faith, the mission of the Church and the several periods of development which can be identified in modern missionary history. The speaker is a minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He served two pastorates in the United States, was a missionary for 11 years in the Argentine Republic, serving both rural and urban pastorates and for a number of years as a teacher in the Union Seminary of Buenos Aires. Since 1957 he has served as the president of the Union Seminary of Puerto Rico. As an employee of the seminary, he is not a missionary in the "classical" sense of the term. The value of these talks will consist not so much in the setting forth of solutions to problems as in serving as a stimulus for our common thinking about the changing role of the missionary and the special implications of the forces which are being released in Latin American life today.

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I

The Eternal Problem Of Self-Identification

When we ask ourselves the meaning of the role of a missionary in Latin America today, we are returning to the age-old problem of self-identification — self-knowledge. Do we know who we are? Early in the classic of Cervantes, *DON QUIJOTE DE LA MANCHA*, the hero of the book dons the armour of a medieval knight and sallies forth to do battle for the cause of good and justice. He soon finds himself fallen to the ground and unable, because of the weight of his armour, to get up. From this ridiculous position he has a short conversation with a woodsman in which he denies the identity attributed to him by the woodsman and affirms in the unforgettable words of Cervantes "Yo sé quién soy" (I know who I am). There is perhaps no deeper affirmation which man can make than to assert his self-knowledge and to know who he really is. When we say that we are missionaries — do we know what this means today?

This emphasis on self-identification can also be found in the wisdom of Confucius. This sage of ancient China affirmed that the basic problems of human society are due to the fact that men are unable to define their own roles and responsibilities. He assumed that society consists of a certain number of basic relationships. These relationships are constant and natural. Evil arises when men do not understand them; and the solution to the evils of his day, thought Confucius, was in the "rectifying of names." The lack of precise definitions led to confusion in communication and the misconceptions of these relationships produced chaos in human affairs. The deepest need, he thought, was in the clarification of these relationships. When a "father" knows what it means to be a "father," then he will maintain a proper relationship to his children and parental responsibilities will be properly assumed. Thus, successively, the proper definition of the roles of the mother, the son, the daughter, the governor, the employer, the employee, and the laborer, would go far toward the solution of the social problems of the day. On the basis of this assumption, one might assume that there is a "natural," classic or universal definition of the role of the missionary, which once defined, would be universally and permanently valid.

However, we know that relationships are not as "fixed" as our Chinese sage assumed, but rather are conditioned by varying cultures and the dyna-

mic qualities to be found in every culture. Thus the basic questions which Confucius asked must be asked again and again. Each generation and each culture must seek to find answers which are relevant and valid for the peculiar and given circumstance. Perhaps there *are* certain unvarying, permanently valid elements in the answers to these questions — the absolutes cannot be eliminated *a priori*. But the variables must surely be recognized and the questions must be asked again and again.

To whom shall we direct the question of self-identification? To the degree that there is some normative source of information, then surely an answer must be sought there. As we ask ourselves about the role of the missionary, we must obviously seek an answer first in Holy Scripture and church tradition, giving clear priority to the former and thus being true to our Protestant heritage. We must also ask the person himself — in this case, the missionary — that he may make his own self-identification. But we must also direct our question to others — for their objective judgment cannot be neglected in our search for a complete answer. The missionary himself, in his subjective judgment of his own role, may fall into the self-deception and egoistic distortion which is common to all subjective judgments. But his contemporary friends — and his contemporary enemies — also have something to say about his role. When the Scottish poet longed for the power "to see ourselves as others see us," he did not necessarily affirm the superiority of the objective point of view, but he surely did recognize that it is a *different* perspective than our own introspection. Each of these sources responds to our question of the role of the missionary — and each has its own perspective and its own values. In the best of cases, these values will prove to be supplementary and the blending of them all will provide us with an answer. But they may also prove to be contradictory, in which case we must choose — accept and reject. In such cases, where does the truth really lie? How difficult is this question and how well illustrated in a poem of the great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

WHO AM I?

*Who am I? They often tell me
I stepped from my cell's confinement
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly
Like a squire from his country home.*

*Who am I? They often tell me
I used to speak to my warders
Freely and friendly and clearly
As though it were mine to command.*

*Who am I? They also tell me
I bore the days of misfortune
Equably, smilingly, proudly
Like one accustomed to win.*

*Am I then really that which other men tell of?
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
Struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat.
Yearning for colours, for flowers, for voices of birds,
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,
Tossing in expectation of great events,
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making
Faint and ready to say farewell to it all.*

*Who am I? This or the other?
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
And before myself a contemptible woebegone weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?*

*Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!*

— *written from a prison cell and published in the
book THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP*

What does it mean to say: "I am a missionary"? Who am I? Is there some absolute meaning of the term? Some unconditioned definition or significance? Am I who I think I am? Am I, as a missionary, what the sending church thinks me to be? Am I really what the supporting board intends? Or am I truly what the younger church sees in me? What does it mean to be a missionary today in Latin America? This is our question. Let us turn first to an effort to answer our question in the light of our Christian faith and the history and mission of the church.

II

God Has Spoken — He Is the Author of the Mission

As we approach the problem of the identification of the missionary, we dare not do so merely in terms of our own limited experience nor that of our contemporaries — and certainly not in terms of the momentary circumstances in which we find ourselves. This would be to falsify the definition — an "up to the minute" answer but unrelated to the centuries and to eternity.

The Word of God must be seen as the expression of Divine Will, Divine Power and Divine Truth. We believe, as Christians, that God in His very being is infinite, invisible, omnipotent, omniscient, immutable and eternal. We can accept this "eleatic" list of attributes, but must proceed to a more biblical approach of affirming that this Great God speaks and acts. He is dynamic, not static and His being is understood in His doing. He is, for us, Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer. He manifests Himself through His mighty acts — "speaks" to men. His speaking and His acting are blended together into one mighty event. "Let there be light" — and there was light. All of creation is conceived as the result of the "speaking" of God. His power is made manifest in His Word — which carries within itself the power to make real that which it expresses. This basic, biblical concept of the power of the Word of God was a fundamental concept in the thinking of Martin Luther. The German reformer insists that we must make a qualitative distinction between the ephemeral words of men and mighty Word of God. His whole sacramental system rests upon this dynamic concept of God's Word.

The Word of God has been expressed and made manifest in at least three ways: creation, prophecy and incarnation. It is entirely evident in Holy Scripture that creation was the result of the Word of God. His "voice" brings into being — witness the book of Genesis — and His Voice can cause a "ceasing to be" — "He utters His voice and the earth melts." In the prophetic movement, His mighty Word was released into history as it had not been before. The prophet does not think of himself solely as a "messenger" who imparts some passive concept, but one who is releasing the powerful Word of God into history. He is not simply communicating an idea, but releasing a powerful force which cannot be frustrated nor defeated. "My Word shall not return to me empty, but it shall achieve that for which it was sent (or was expressed)." The prophet who announces the destruction of his people, thus becomes the instrument of that destruction and the executioner of his own people. This is one of the sources of the agony of the prophetic vocation. Finally, this mighty Word, becomes flesh and dwells among men and they are able to see His glory, as the glory of the only Son from the Father. The "visibility" of the glory of the Word in the incarnation is a triumphant affirmation of the author of the fourth Gospel. Here is continuity in revelation — creation is the work of the Word, prophecy is the Word released in history and the Gospel is the incarnation of the Word. Throughout it all — "God has spoken."

The Word of God speaks to us clearly and dramatically in the history of Israel. Here He declares His eternal purposes and proceeds to act toward the realization of these purposes. In the earliest account of the Covenant between God and Abraham, we are told that the ultimate effect of this Covenant will be that Abraham "will be a blessing" and by him "all the families of the earth will bless themselves" (Gen. 12:1-3). The purpose of God is, from its first disclosure, a universal purpose and embraces all men in its scope. Across the pages of biblical history we see the unfolding of this purpose. With an assumption of a linear concept of

time, this history moves from a beginning to an end — and it has a purpose, which is the purpose of God. All events of history must be seen within the context of this perspective. This purpose is clarified further in the New Testament and we are told that the mystery of His purpose has been revealed and that all things will be consummated in Christ.

Not only does the Word reveal the purpose of God, but it declares the election of His instruments. Wherever one finds the highest vision of divine election, it is always in terms of the divine purpose. Biblical election is to mission. God's people are blessed that they may be a blessing. They have a knowledge of His purposes that they may be the instrument of His will. No finer passage can be found in Scripture than that in Isaiah 42:1–9 in which we find this affirmation:

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: "I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you a covenant to the people, *"a light to the nations,"* to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."

The testimony of Scripture is that God chooses a people to serve His purpose which is all-embracing. When the people fail Him, He promises a remnant of faithful. When even the remnant fails, He proclaims the coming One — the Messiah. The election is progressively narrowed — from all people to one people, from the nation to the remnant and from the remnant to the One.

The New Covenant is thus a reiteration and reaffirmation of the Old Covenant, with a new accent on its inwardness and its universality. It is anticipated by Jeremiah in both these qualities. The giving of the Great Commission and the dramatic events of the Day of Pentecost herald the new breadth of the mission, the widening of the chosen people and the overcoming of all barriers. "No one who believes in Him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon Him." (Romans 10:11, 12). Before Jesus Christ, there is a progressive narrowing of the instrument of the mission; after Jesus Christ there is a progressive broadening. He becomes the center of the history of God's *"missionary"* activity among men. He *IS* the mission. He *is* the Word of God incarnate. His *being* is the fulfillment of His *mission*.

The Church is the Body of Christ. While not a new incarnation, it is a projection of the ministry of Jesus and the present instrument for the achievement of the mission. As in His experience, so in our own: being is mission. "Let the Church be the Mission," has become the theme of the best missionary thinking of our day. This basic identity of the mis-

sion of the church with the nature of the church is fundamental to a true understanding both of ourselves and the contemporary church. The Church IS the mission.

Who then, is the missionary? Obviously, in a general sense, every Christian!! The call, *klesis*, of God has gone out into the world. Those who respond to this call, the *ekkletoi*, are the "called" of God. When gathered together into churches, we are the *ekklesia*. The essential character of the church is that it is the body of Christ, composed of those who have been *called*. The calling is to mission. We are blessed that we might become a blessing. We are chosen for the fulfillment of God's purposes. But in a more common usage, the missionary is not only he who is *called* (for all Christians are called), but also he who is *sent*. He is that Christian for whom the mission has become the obsession of his life and whose very existence is understood in terms of the mission. He is the one who is *sent* — either by the compulsion of an inner call or by the commissioning of the church — or both. In either event, the true missionary is that Christian in whose heart and mind the revelation of God's eternal purpose and mission have become a burning compulsion. Perhaps it is the author of the Ephesian letter who most clearly expresses the consciousness of the missionary — the reception of the revelation of God's purposes, the understanding of election in terms of mission and the vision of the implications of the vocation of the missionary. Our heritage of western individualism has led us to think of the mission and the missionary in highly individualistic terms — as the status which results from personal and often mystical experiences of vocational call. However, a true biblical understanding of the nature and role of the missionary leads us to a different "frame of reference" than merely our personal experience. This larger context is first an understanding of the purpose of God as revealed in Scripture, and second, the mission of the Church as the instrument of God's eternal purpose. Our mission must be understood in the light of the mission of the church, and the church, in turn, must see her mission in the light of the purposes of God. This is the basic kind of self-identification which is true of the missionary and it is this which can be seen in so many of the passages of the Apostle Paul. Let us hear him as he identifies himself in the Roman letter: "This letter comes to you from Paul, servant of Jesus Christ, called as a messenger and appointed for the service of the Gospel of God which was long ago promised by the prophets in Holy Scripture."

III

The Identification Of the Modern Missionary

We now turn to the term "missionary" as it has been used in the context of the modern missionary movement. This movement covers the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th Century. It is a vastly complex movement, with many facets and dimensions. However, there are two aspects of this modern missionary movement which deserve special attention as we examine the role of the missionary. This modern missionary movement seems to have been produced by the coincidence, not necessarily accidental and possibly providential, of two situations: (1) the pietistic-evangelical awakening in the Protestant Churches and (2) the outward sweep of European culture to the furthestmost points of the earth. Let us look briefly at these two roots of the modern missionary movement.

The post-reformation period in Protestantism was largely characterized by an excessive concern for the external "forms" of religion. In some instances the concern was for liturgical forms and in other instances, for theological forms, while in still other, it was ecclesiological forms. In Germany, there were deep tensions between the more orthodox Lutherans and the more liberal followers of Philip Melancthon, between Lutherans and Calvinists, between anabaptists and all other Christian bodies, and especially between Protestants and Catholics. In the churches of the Calvinist tradition, there was an undue concern for certain aspects of theological formulation, especially upon the doctrine of predestination as defined by Dort. In England the Puritan-Anglican controversy was long and bitter, bringing deep frustrations to all. The Thirty Years' War left Germany and other parts of Europe prostrate. The Reformation was born with a burning dream of a revived Christendom, but by mid-seventeenth century, one can find little save discouragement and deep concern. This situation was further complicated by the rise of rationalism which sought to apply the virtues of simple logic to the problems of the day, including those of doctrinal controversies. There were little signs of warmth, tolerance, subjective appropriation of truth or of religious vigor. Out of the rather desolate state of things arose the pietistic movement in Germany, with its emphasis on personal experience, small group study, the devotional life, service to the needy and the rediscovery of the world-wide mission of the church. Franke and Spenner became the guiding spirits of the movement and Von Zinzendorf, one of the clearest manifestations of pietism. Halle became the center of its intellectual life and from this institution its influence reached out to distant places. In England, the evangelical awakening came early in the following century. The Wesley brothers and Whitfield were its clearest and most effective leaders. From England, the awakening spread to the English colonies of North America. Out of this pietistic-evangelical awakening came the inner roots of the modern missionary movement, with its emphasis on personal religion, conversion, personal

"experience," subjective appropriation of truth and strong evangelistic appeal. For this great movement, we are deeply grateful — for the rediscovery of values which were in danger of being lost from the Protestant tradition. However, we must be aware of the limitations of this form of Christianity, at the same time that we appreciate its virtues. It was largely individualistic in its approach, it did not become the dominant strain in the territorial churches, and while it did motivate service to the needy members of society, it was not quick to recognize the social responsibilities of the Christian Church. Thus it is important to remember that the modern missionary movement was an expression of certain aspects of the Christian faith and life, but that it did neglect other aspects. One of our tasks today is to supply the forgotten elements to the witness of the missionary movement.

The second circumstance, and one which was "outside" of the church, was the expansion of Europe throughout the world. The modern missionary movement in Africa and Asia (for Protestants) and in Latin America (for Roman Catholics) took place largely as a parallel movement with the colonial power of Europe. In the case of Protestant missions in Latin America, the expansion took place *after* political independence and *not during* the period of political colonialism. But the fact remains that missions succeed in a large measure to the degree that religion can become an authentic expression of the national culture and experience, without being related to or identified with foreign interests, whether political or economic.

As far as Latin America is concerned, the struggle for political independence found the Roman Catholic Church generally aligned with the interests of the Spanish Empire and thus considered an enemy of political independence. Latin America now seeks economic independence, social justice and economic progress. In every country there is a tendency on the part of certain groups to see the United States as having an economic empire in Latin America and as being opposed to this "economic independence." Since Protestantism in Latin America has largely been an expression of the missionary efforts of North American churches, there is danger that Latin American Protestantism will be seen as an advocate and supporter of northern economic interests.

The basic witness and work of the church never takes place in a vacuum, but is directly affected by the currents of history. Just as the struggle for political independence in India had its effect on the role of the British missionary, so does the modern economic aspiration of Latin America have an effect upon the missionary from North America. To ignore the relationship between these world forces and national trends and the work of the church, is to live in a "fool's paradise," unaware of the world in which one lives.

One parallel observation needs also to be made: our definition of our role today will be deeply colored by the "image" which we have of what a missionary is. Since this image has developed through various stages

and has been conceived from various points of view, it is important that we recall the basic elements in these varying images.

A) Let us look at the "image" of the missionary in the nineteenth century as the modern missionary movement developed. How did the "home church" look upon the missionary? Of course, at first, he was seen as a "crank" and a "fanatic" who was more of a problem than anything else. However, as the church slowly became aware of her mission to the whole world, the missionary became the symbol and the instrument of the fulfillment of the mission of the church. It is true that the vision of the mission was largely conceived in individualistic and other-worldly terms, but it was a "sense of mission" and the missionary was its finest expression. He was thought of as the brave, daring pioneer. He became the "hero" of the Christian church. He was the evangel sent to the non-Christian world to save the souls of the lost. He was a self-sacrificing servant of the Lord who forsook the security and comfort of his own land to go to the ends of the earth. For a vast host of the Church, he was the finest and noblest expression of the true Christian. He was prayed for, loved, and admired. His virtues were extolled. Hundreds of books were written and thousands of readers were deeply stirred by his example. Throughout these early years, there was a clear geographic assumption underlying missionary thinking. Christendom was a fairly well-defined area of the world — primarily Europe and North America, and for some, Latin America. Asia and Africa were the non-Christian areas of the world. The Missionary literally left the confines of Christendom to "take the Gospel" to a new geographic area. Thus missions became a kind of world crusade — to "conquer" the world for Christ. A congregation or a denomination was assumed to have a moral obligation to support this crusade and the spreading of Christianity throughout the world was assumed to have become a *permanent* part of the work of the church.

The missionary himself was a part of the sending church and shared many of these basic ideas and attitudes. He tended to see his role within the context of this understanding of the missionary responsibility of the church. He thought of himself as a kind of modern apostle; not in arrogance, but in terms of being called to proclaim the gospel and of having been sent by the Church. But he thought of himself as being sent, not only by the church, but also by a divine commissioning, as one upon whom the spirit of the Lord has fallen. Often his supporting churches or mission boards asked him for his testimony of having been called to the missionary task. He was usually driven by a deeply rooted longing to convert the heathen in the non-Christian world — and it was the drive to "save" the non-Christian, not to "serve" the needy world, that constituted the taproot of missionary impulse. His candidacy, his assignment, his approval and his support were largely dependent upon evidence of his missionary call, of his apostolic mission. Often his success or failure, both in his own eyes and the eyes of the church, were largely judged by this ultimate criteria: the number of converts to the Christian faith. He thought of himself as working amid non-Christians and his true immediate surroundings were the elements of the non-Christian culture. His immediate and

personal contacts, the persons with and for whom he worked, were the non-Christian nationals of his field. The history of the 19th century missionary movement is full of illustrations of the long, arduous years which often preceded the first conversion of a pagan to the Christian faith. Not just Carey and Morrison, but a great host of these early missionaries lived and worked on the very frontier of Christendom. They tended to think of themselves as having established a kind of "beachhead" for Christendom in what was essentially "enemy" territory. These missionaries did not usually think of their mission as being "cultural," but "religious." What there was of cultural appendages was often taken unconsciously to their field of labors.

In comparison with this image of the missionary in the sending church and the image held by the missionary himself, how was he seen by his contemporaries in his field of labor? He was often seen as the representative of western culture and western political and economic, and sometimes, military interests. His arrival coincided with others who *did* represent these interests and it was almost inevitable that in the minds of the nationals of the country, he should be thus conceived. But with the passing of time, he was thought of as the ambassador of Christendom. In fact, *he was the Church* in these early years. The non-Christian world saw and conceived of the Christian Church in terms of the life and testimony of these Christian witnesses — it was the only source of their knowledge. In either event, the missionary represented something new and different (whether culture or religion) and for many, his presence meant a threat to the established ways of living and thinking. Some missionaries showed genuine appreciation for the national culture and religion, while others looked upon both as "heathen and pagan." But in all cases, the missionary had come to bring something new which called for radical change and constituted, to varying degrees, a threat to the *status quo*. Many of the non-Christians felt that the missionary represented a superior culture — and his presence was a blessing to the country — he was looked upon as a benefactor and was admired by many who had not the slightest inclination to become Christians. The missionary was often the recipient of assistance and support, and in some instances high honors, by national leaders who were never seriously inclined to conversion to Christianity. However, a few were drawn to him in deep devotion and became believers in Jesus Christ. These early converts became his fellow-Christians and his co-workers. They sacrificed their status in family and society and became the nucleus of the "younger" churches. They were the "children in the faith" of the early missionaries and looked upon their spiritual "fathers" with deep devotion and affection.

Here we have, then, a brief description of the image of the early missionary, as held by the sending church, by himself and by his contemporaries in his field of service. He was an ambassador of Christ to the non-Christian world. He often lived a life of difficulty, danger and sacrifice. These qualities of character, and this spirit were what characterized the best candidates for mission service. The preparation of the missionary

and the methods used in the work grew out of this ambassadorship. We can only admire their success and give thanks for their endurance. They knew their *role* and perservered in it.

B) Let us turn now to the image of the missionary which we can discover in the *early part of the twentieth century*. I have chosen to use the year 1930 as the close of this period. We must first contemplate the new factors which appeared and which had far-reaching influence on the changing image of the missionary. (1) The missionary task assumed large proportions in the closing years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Churches were largely now convinced that they were responsible for the evangelization of all mankind. Support for missionary work was growing to an amazing degree. Hundreds of volunteers appeared for mission service, moved in a large degree by the Student Volunteer Movement. "Missions" had become a "major activity" of the Protestant Churches. (2) The younger churches had now emerged and begun to take an important place in the world enterprise of the church. At the Panama Conference in 1916, it was affirmed "The evangelical church in the field is practically a new force. It did not exist when the first missionaries began their work...this force is so new that it is not yet fully understood..." (Panama Conference, Volume II, p. 227). The reality of the national church was slowly recognized but the implications of this new reality were hardly suspected in the early years of the century. (3) There was a broadening vision of the world mission of the church which had deep effects upon missionary thinking. This grew partially out of the Social Gospel and similar movements, and in part, it was the response of the Christian Church to the reports of the missionaries as they described life in the under-developed countries where most of the mission work was done. There was an energetic defense of medical missions, agricultural missions, educational missions, etc. The social obligations of the church became increasingly clear. At the Panama Conference, Dr. Charles T. Paul gave an address on the topic "The Principles and Spirit of Jesus Essential to Meet the Social Needs of our Time." (4) While some beginnings in cooperating and joint planning had taken place in the 19th century, the early years of the twentieth century marked a great advance in this regard. For Latin America, the date of 1916 when the Panama Conference was held marks an important turning point in the history of Protestant missions. The Committee on Cooperation in Latin America came into being. Local ecumenical beginnings can be seen and for the first time, the leaders of Protestant missions in Latin America began to think together about the total mission responsibility in these 20 republics. (5) This period is also one of growing tension between the United States of America and the Latin American republics. In the 19th century, these republics often looked upon the United States with admiration and took its basic public institutions as models. But the early twentieth century saw the signs of political and economic interests emanating from North America and penetrating into Latin America. Dollar diplomacy and the Big Stick Policy became descriptive terms for the policies of the United States. Tensions with Mexico, the circumstances surrounding the building

of the Panama Canal, the use of the Marine Corps, the retention of Puerto Rico following the Spanish-American War and the rapid increase of North American capital investments in Latin America, all combined to issue in a period of tension which had its effects upon the role of the missionary in Latin America, since the vast majority of the Protestant missionaries were citizens of the United States. These factors, and other minor ones not mentioned, enter into the picture of the missionary in the early 20th century.

The image held by the sending church retained much of that which characterized the 19th century. However, the churches were slowly accepting a broader concept of the world mission of the church and there was increasing willingness on the part of the churches to support projects of a "service" character, in addition to the purely evangelistic missionary activity. A study of the lists of missionaries in the second decade of this century indicates that there were hundreds of non-ordained missionaries whose tasks included a wide variety of services to the needs of their respective fields. In 1916, one major mission board reported that only 21 of its 74 missionaries in Brazil were ordained. Many were teachers and others carried out varied ministries in the evangelical church of Brazil. In the light of the emerging "younger" churches, there was a tendency on the part of mission boards to select men with "executive" ability as missionaries, since their duties as leaders of the younger churches required this kind of talent. Thus the image of the 19th century was enriched to include a variety of types of missionaries which in turn meant a broader concept of the mission of the church. Special importance was given to the role of the missionary as the "leader" of the younger church.

The missionary himself also retained much of the 19th century image. He was still a missionary to the non-Christian. But more and more, he began to think of himself as the leader and teacher of the emerging younger church. As national preachers appeared, the missionary assumed the responsibility of preparing them. Thus he tended to be removed from the "front line" of the work of the church in its evangelistic outreach. More and more of his time was used in formulating policy, making plans for the growth of the church, serving as the organizer of the younger church, teaching its new leaders and organizing and supervising its institutions. This development was probably inevitable and should be considered as a positive step forward. However, it placed the missionary in the role of the "superior" to his growing number of national colleagues. Often he unconsciously assumed an attitude of superiority and he retained in his own hands the basic decision-making role. This was clearly demonstrated in the Panama Conference where the Commission on message and Method was made up of 4 Latin Americans and 22 non-Latin American missionaries and mission board executives. In this period only very limited participation was allowed the national leadership in the administration and policy formulation of the church. This important role was largely a missionary role and national participation was more a future promise than a present reality. Thus, the missionary thought of himself more and more in

terms of being the teacher, leader, director and statesman in the life of the younger church. This marks a fundamental change from the 19th century image held by the pioneer missionaries. It should be noted that while there are the beginnings of cooperating in Latin America, the vast majority of the missionaries in this period dedicated their entire energy to their own denominations. Thus the exercise of this new role of leader and teacher, of guide to the younger church, took place largely within the frame of reference of the denominational structure of the older churches, particularly those of the United States. He tended to think of himself as a missionary from a given denomination (and often from a given country) to a newer generation in a new country of that same denomination. It was probably inevitable that he should thus conceive his mission. But the result was that in the formative stage of the younger church, the basic thinking of the missionary continued to be circumscribed by his own denominational heritage and loyalty.

The image of the missionary in the country where he worked has a double dimension: the image held by the non-Christian society and that held by the national church. The missionary whose ministry was one of social service, i.e. a school principal or a doctor or hospital head, continues to be in rather direct contact with the non-Christian society. His contributions to the national life are of a very practical and tangible nature. He tends to be well known in non-Protestant circles and is given considerable recognition for his contributions, often including high honors granted by non-Christian governments. On the other hand, the church administrator tended to be increasingly removed from contact with the non-Christian society and becomes an increasingly indistinct figure for that society. He was often looked upon in the same context of the foreign business executive who supervises the enterprise with little direct contact with the culture of the country and who leans heavily upon an increasingly competent national staff. The distinctively "Christian" nature of the image of the missionary tended to be dimmed in this period. The non-ecclesiastical missionary was known for his specific professional and cultural contributions, and the ecclesiastical missionary was increasingly removed from his direct contact with the non-Christian community.

Now we turn to the new dimension of the image — that held by the national church. Here we find a mixture of images and emotions. There is evidence of deep personal gratitude for the contribution which the missionaries have made, a gratitude which is expressed with deep feeling and conviction. It was through the labor and sacrifice of the missionary that the gospel came to the country. The national church feels a deep indebtedness for this service. There is a tendency on the part of national leaders to recognize the superior training and experience of the missionary. But there is also a growing desire to share in the decision-making and to play a larger role in the leadership of the church. As the number and quality of national leaders increased across the early decades of the 20th century, this desire also increased. For example, it was in 1916 that the number of national ordained ministers in the Brazilian

Methodist Church (23) surpassed the number of ordained missionaries (21). As the years passed, the proportion of national ministers continued to increase along with the natural desire to exercise leadership. Generally speaking, the missionary is conceived by the national church as being a "father in the faith" who deserves respect and appreciation for his service, his preparation and his experience. But also a feeling is found that this "father" is a bit slow to recognize the growing maturity of the younger generation and is excessively reluctant to relinquish the controls which he has long held in his hands. We find a suggestion that this particular role of "adult advisor" is by nature one of limited duration and is due for progressive elimination as the younger generation (in this case the younger church) comes to maturity. The temporally limited character of this role was not only felt by the national leadership, but also by the more sensitive missionaries.

C) The more recent period from 1930 to the present (1963) has been characterized by a number of new factors which should be briefly mentioned before we examine the new image of the missionary which developed during these three decades. We shall list here ten of the more important factors which play a part in this changing scene. (1) The economic crisis of the early 30's produced drastic reductions in missionary budgets, missionary personnel and in the subsidies available to the younger churches. The immediate result was to add a much greater responsibility to the national churches, both in terms of finance and in leadership. (2) Beginning in 1932, there was a slow improvement in Inter-American relationships until near the end of the Second World War. Recent decades have been marked by growing tension, and by growing awareness of a major crisis in Latin America on the part of the United States. (3) There has been remarkable growth on the part of Protestant Churches, in terms of numbers, quality of program, influence and in terms of over-all maturity. The total Latin American Protestant community can be estimated at around 8 or 9 million persons and its growth during the past two decades has surpassed the rate of over-all population growth in Latin America. (4) Latin American leaders have assumed the decision-making role in the Protestant Church to an ever greater degree. This is true in the historic churches as well as in the autochthonous "pentecostal" churches. It is less true of the "faith missions" where the individual missionary tends to retain the leadership of the church. (5) There has been a marked increase in the number of "faith missions" and non-church-related missions since the end of World War II. This has been stimulated in part by the closing of China as a mission field and to the increasing difficulty in the obtaining of visas by missionaries who do not represent a church that is already established in many of the Asian and African countries. (6) Latin America is faced with a dramatic population explosion which is comparable only to that of Asia. The population was roughly 100 million in 1925 and increased to about 200 million in 1960. This increase (which will be even more pronounced during the remaining decades of the current century) has produced sharp tensions and very severe economic strains in all of the

Latin American countries. It is evident that major changes will take place in the structure of Latin American society in coming years. (7) The situation just described has made for real and basic changes in the appeal of certain fundamental concepts. Throughout the 19th century, the concept of "liberty" seems to have had the greatest emotional appeal to Latin Americans. However, the present situation has brought two new concepts to the fore as ideological forces in present-day Latin America: economic progress and social justice. While it can be hoped that these two new values can be sought and achieved simultaneously, it is evident that in many circles in Latin America there is some disposition to sacrifice the former for the achievement of the latter. (8) There has been a growing spirit of nationalism throughout Latin America in recent years. This force has both positive and negative expressions. On the one hand it is proving to be a powerful motivation for the achievement of a national effort to lift the level of life and the standard of living. On the other hand, it makes more difficult the kind of international cooperation which is needed desperately to cope with the complex problems which beset these nations. Certainly the church must take careful note of this new spirit of nationalism and ask itself the meaning of this new situation for the policies of the church. Since this spirit of nationalism often expresses itself in an "anti-North Americanism," it has special significance for the Protestant Church in Latin America. (9) There is a growing awareness on the part of Latin American Church leaders of the social responsibilities of the church. In the beginnings of this social consciousness, the primary concern of the church was to serve the victims of the social situation through schools and hospitals. In such service, the missionary could have a vital part. Now, however, the new social consciousness seeks for ways to express itself in terms of the national life of each country — in the support of specific economic, social and political policies by government. In such circumstances, it is obvious that the foreign missionary has serious limitations. Thus we must on the one hand welcome the new social awareness of the Latin American Churches and on the other, recognize its implications for the role of the missionary. (10) There is also evident a growing ecumenical concern on the part of Latin American leadership. This has not yet produced major fruits of organic church union except in a very few instances. But it is evident that there is some restlessness and impatience with the historic confessional and denominational approach to the Christian faith and the Christian witness. The more sensitive Latin American leadership does not want to be a prisoner of one single tradition, but would like to become the heir of the whole Christian tradition. He increasingly feels as deep a sense of Christian fellowship with his fellow-Christians of other churches within his own country, as he does with those of his own denomination in distant lands. As the years go by, it can be expected that this "local" manifestation of the ecumenical movement and the "national" awareness of deep, Christian unity will lead to closer cooperation and ultimately to organic union. Surely the role of the missionary in such circumstances is not to pretend to prolong the agony of denominational fragmentation nor stand against the yearnings for Christian union which are evident among many Latin American national leaders.

Here, then, are some of the new factors which have vast consequences for the role of the missionary. We now turn to the image of the missionary current today.

In the older churches, there is still to be found many of the ideas and attitudes of the 19th century. The image of the missionary which lives in these local churches now seems far removed from the reality of the modern world. It is interesting to note the efforts being made by mission boards today to up-date the concept of mission among the rank and file of the church membership in the United States. But many of the older churches also continue to think of the missionary as the "leader" of the younger church. Much is said about the "indigenous" church, but too little is understood about the radical implications of such a church for the missionary movement. Far too many older churches continue to think of the missionary they support as "their representative" or the representative of "their denomination and tradition" and thus see his work through the categories of their own experience and history. In the recruitment materials one discovers some evidence of a re-definition of the role of the missionary in terms of a more adequate concept of the mission of the whole church to the whole world. But many new missionaries continue to arrive on the field with a concept of missions and the image of the missionary which is the product of their local church experience, constituting a "cultural lag" of serious consequence. The older church continues to think of the younger church as being essentially of the same genus, but as being simply a younger generation! The radical newness of the younger churches seems not to have penetrated the older churches nor have sufficiently colored the image of the missionary.

As we turn to the contemporary missionary himself, what can be said of his own "image"? He tends to see himself as the colleague of his national brother. He recognizes that he no longer holds in his hands the decision-making rights. Often he is a specially trained person who has been called to a specific task because there did not seem to be a trained national available to do it. A considerable number of missionaries occupy key positions in their churches and institutions, having been elected or appointed to the position by the authorities of the national church. Some of these missionaries confess to some uncertainty about the advisability of their accepting such an appointment. Sometimes, the modern missionary confesses to the feeling of being a 5th wheel — needed at the time of unusual circumstance, but not a permanent part of the operation. He has even felt superfluous at times — a highly contradictory feeling for one who has felt himself called of God to the world mission of the church. The peculiar problems of the modern missionary are related to the particular system of government of the several churches. He often suspects that he has been given a particular assignment because his presence will assist in the financing of the project. As he compares himself with the position he might have had in his home land, he feels that he is making a sacrifice to remain on the mission field — but when he compares his life as a missionary with that of his national colleagues and the people where he works, he often feels himself to be in a privileged position. These contradictory

sentiments produce deep and difficult tensions and should be candidly recognized as a part of the present situation and symptomatic of problems which need solution. Today, the missionary finds that some of his national colleagues are superior both in ability and preparation, calling into serious question the traditional authority of the missionary. While the average person feels a certain pride in his own national background, the North American missionary often finds that being a "Yankee" can be a serious handicap in his relationships with many groups in Latin America. As he looks at himself, he begins to ponder the implications for the modern missionary of the slogans of the past generation: "work oneself out of a job," "produce a self-directing, self-supporting, self-propagating church," etc. Does this mean that the role of the missionary is coming to an end? If the purpose of the missionary has been to "work himself out of a job," why does he cling to the job or have such deep misgivings or regrets as he relinquishes it?

These are days of deep questioning for the missionary who is sensitive to the new situation and who is willing to face the realities of that situation with candor and honesty. He even finds that in some churches, the term missionary has tended to disappear — he is now a "fraternal worker," He is "on loan" from one church to another church and it is the receiving church which actually assigns him to his task. Following these and other lines of thought, some have concluded that the missionary is a relic of an earlier day, that he has really worked himself out of a job, but that he stays on, being tolerated, accommodated and used by the national church whose leaders are moved by feelings of gratitude and Christian charity and by the desire to maintain good relationships with the mission board of the older or sending church. Others, without reaching such extreme conclusions, still are deeply concerned. They are more aware of their "foreignness" than ever before and there is a growing awareness of just how very much of cultural accumulation was brought along with the gospel in the early missionary days. Historic ties which once were considered an unqualified blessing, are now looked upon with mixed feelings as the missionary realizes that this historic tie may very well be an impediment to the genuine incarnation of the gospel in the new culture. He now realizes that the denominationally fragmented church which the mission movement inadvertently planted and which he, the missionary, still represents, is an inadequate witness to the wholeness of the gospel and an unworthy expression of the living Body of Christ. Still other missionaries have gone ahead with their prescribed duties, asking no questions and seeking no answers, sending home routine reports and enjoying a "peace that not only passeth understanding," but rests upon very little understanding of the present moment.

But by far the majority of the present missionary staff is taking a new and hard look at the missionary vocation. They are trying to be honest. They strive to see the ambiguities, the irony of the vocation, but retain also a deep sense of the urgency of the Christian witness. With deeply troubled conscience, he is raising again and again the age-old question of self-identification: What does it mean to be a missionary? What is my

role in the present situation? He was once a pioneer evangelist, later a guide to an emerging church, and more lately, a colleague — but not quite a colleague — of the national church leader. With something of the quandary of the Apostle Paul when he went to Jerusalem to be sure that he was not "running in vain" and to seek the counsel of the elders on his role as a missionary to the gentiles, the present-day missionary faces his own role. Never again will the missionary be what he once was. We must move forward and ask ourselves: what is the role of the foreign Christian worker today? How can he become an integral part of the church where he serves? Is this possible under the present structures and policies of most of the mission boards? What is the meaning of the incarnation or the doctrine of the servant Lord as these mighty truths come to bear upon the missionary? These are the questions we ask and this is where we stand — in a difficult, awkward, embarrassing position which allows neither escape nor long delay.

We must yet examine the role of the missionary as it has been seen and judged by the nationals of the receiving countries during these recent decades. The non-Christian, or in Latin America the non-Protestant, has considerable appreciation for the social services rendered by the missionary. Formal recognition given to missionaries who have served in the fields of medicine and education. But we also note a tendency to emphasize the "foreignness" of the gospel to the national culture. In Latin America there is the increasing insistence on the part of Roman Catholics that Protestantism was more of a cultural rebellion against the Latin world than a genuine religious reformation, that the truly Latin form of Christianity is Roman Catholicism and that Protestantism represents one of the many ways in which Anglo-Saxon culture is penetrating Latin America. Roman Catholic writers have subjected Protestant missions to searching study, analysis and public examination. Father Rivera, S. J., has recently published two books in Mexico in which he analyzes Mexican Protestantism and Protestant Institutions in Mexico. He announces that there are 104 different mission boards or agencies which work directly or indirectly in Mexico, that about one-half of the mission funds remitted for Protestant work are consumed by the foreign missionaries themselves, that there is serious discrepancy between the salaries of the missionaries and those of the national pastors and he feels that the fragmentation of Protestantism has brought with it the seeds of its own destruction, and ineffectiveness. In this modern age of communication and information, we must be prepared to face further "exposés" and well documented criticism. Where our witness in social action in the traditionally Protestant lands is weak or ineffective, we can be sure that those who would weaken our mission work will make use of this defective witness. In an address in Colombia, Bishop Fulton Sheen, affirmed, according to the United Press, that in the United States, "there is racial discrimination only in those areas where there is religious intolerance against the Roman Catholic Church," thus subtly involving Protestantism with the acute problem of racial segregation and weakening its appeal to the Latin American who is so refreshingly

free of racial prejudice. Missionaries, mission boards, mission policies and home-front witness are due for increasing examination by the non-Christian and the non-Protestant.

Within the Protestant Church itself, notable changes can be detected in recent decades. The assertion of national leadership is more and more evident. We have noted that the key Commission on Message and Method of the 1916 Panama Conference was composed of 4 Latin Americans and 22 non-Latin Americans. In 1925 in Montevideo, there were 163 delegates of which 39 were Latin Americans and 124 were missionaries and board personnel (categories judged by Latin and Anglo-Saxon names which is not entirely reliable, but which reflect the composition of the conference). In 1949, the *First* Latin American Evangelical Conference was held in Buenos Aires — organized and led by the councils of Latin America. There were 59 delegates, 48 of which were Latin Americans and only 11 missionaries. The formal report of this conference gives little or no mention of the mission board executives who were observers or visitors. In 1961, in Lima, Peru, the Second Latin American Conference was held with 110 delegates, 90 of whom were Latin Americans and 20 missionaries (approximately). Mission board executives were listed as being from the USA, were granted voice but no vote in the proceedings. No mission board executive nor missionary formed a part of the organizing committee nor held an office in the conference. This assertion of national leadership should be cause for rejoicing. It is evident that this national assertion is generally not of the extreme character which threatens international fellowship and cooperation. In 1949, there was still a call for more foreign missionaries. This call was not reiterated in 1961; the Lima conference simply indicated that if foreign missionaries are sent, they should have the necessary preparation to identify themselves with the culture of the country where they are to serve. One concludes from this rapid survey that the Latin American church is questioning the role which the missionary has traditionally played in its life. But this same church has affirmed that there is a place for the foreign-born Christian worker provided he is willing to identify himself with the new culture and with the church where he is to serve. In these continental gatherings, national church leaders have been free to express themselves, uninhibited by concern that financial support might be affected by what they say. The church is simply saying in these gatherings that it is still willing to use the *services* of the missionary, but that he will have a smaller share in policy and decision making. This is having and will have far-reaching effects upon recruitment, selection, preparation, appointment, payment and use of foreign personnel, contributing to what amounts to a genuine crisis in the missionary vocation.

IV

The Facing of the Crisis In the Missionary Vocation

The word "crisis" has been much used in the last three decades — so much so that it not only has tended to lose something of its inherent force as a word, but hardly seems to deserve mention as a new factor in the role of the missionary. It is true that in a certain sense, crisis is an inherent part of the gospel and of the Christian witness. Lindsell has affirmed "...the very nature of missions from within its own genius presupposes a crisis component" (see *MISSIONARY PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE*). But the character and the magnitude of the crisis faced today is not this constant element of which he speaks, but rather the combination of two very critical situations which taken separately would each have produced a serious situation, but which coming together have combined to produce a most critical situation. It is important that we have an appreciation of the sources of our crisis.

One of the sources of crisis for men and institutions is in *radical and rapid change*. A certain degree of change is always a part of human life. We are accustomed, in the temperate zones, to making adjustments to the varieties of temperatures which we have in the course of a year. Those of us who live in rather close contact with two different cultures are aware of the factors of adjustment as we move from one to the other. If the changes are moderate ones, or if they take place over a long span of time, we can usually make some kind of adjustment to them. However when the changes are rapid and of a radical character, they tend to produce a major crisis. Most forms of life in the temperate zones make the seasonal adjustments, but when the ice-age descended upon North America, many forms of life became extinct — they were unable to adjust to a rapid and radical change in the circumstances. Our problem as missionaries is vastly aggravated by the rapidity of the change. In a recent issue of *CRISTIANISMO Y SOCIEDAD*, the Rev. Rafael Cepeda affirms that this difference in cadence between the church and the world is one of our serious problems. The church continues to dance the minuet, but the world is dancing the accelerated rhythm of jazz and the twist! One of the world's leading authorities on social ethics, Dr. John Bennett, has called attention to the difference in the "time schedule" between the young Negro leaders in the southern states of the United States and the more conservative leaders of the white majority. While the whites talk of "process" and patience, the Negroes demand immediate action! The rapidity of the development of the racial struggle in the United States has taken most leaders by complete surprise. It is interesting to read the comments of Walter Lippman concerning the sensitivity of the President to the "rush" of events, as this famed commentator commented in *NEWSWEEK* on July 8: "The President and his brother, the Attorney General, deserve great credit for realizing at once what had happened so suddenly. They understood

the magnitude and the temper of the rebellion set aflame by the clash between Martin Luther King's demonstrating Negroes and Bull Connor's fire hose, dogs and policemen's clubs. For myself, I count very high the speed, the intelligence, the imagination and the courage of the Kennedy reaction. Only too often in human affairs do those who reach the highest places leave behind them the capacity to react to the new and unexpected." It should be further noted that in the crisis at the University of Alabama, there was only a three minute delay between the rejection of the Negro girl at the university and the federalization of the National Guard of the State of Alabama. This incident is highly revealing of the pace of the modern world and the speed with which decisions and new policies must be made and executed. The rapidity of events in Latin America is bringing every institution and every vocation to a moment of crisis. The missionary and his vocation are not immune nor isolated from this rapidly changing world. But the changes are not only rapid but also radical. It is this combination which forces us to use the word crisis. New ideals are sweeping the world, new forces are being released in Latin America. No longer are the masses deeply moved by a defense of "liberty" — but by the cry for justice and the determination to make economic progress. Great ideas are not only to be judged by their inherent correlation to truth, but also by their capacity to generate great energy among men. New ideas and new forces are appearing. Currents of many decades are being reversed. It is difficult to find the time to survey the current literature and try to take the "pulse" of our countries. But any serious attempt to do so will reveal the depth of the changes which are taking place within the minds of Latin Americans today. Part of our crisis lies precisely in our inability to understand this age of change. As the Pharisees of old, we say "Four months until the harvest time." But Jesus condemned their inability to read the "signs of the times" and proclaimed the "harvest time" to be a present reality. The pharisaic mind could only think of the *long process* — while the mind of Jesus was sensitive to the import of the *present moment*. We have tragically been thinking with the "mind of the Pharisee," while the secular world seems so much more representative of the "immediacy" of the "mind of Christ." This is one of the dimensions of our crisis — a lack of understanding, an inability to read the signs of the times. The rapid and radical change of our world has caught us unaware and we find ourselves unprepared to relate ourselves creatively to the new situation. Missionaries, mission board policies, traditions and precedents — how desperately we need the flexibility and immediacy of those who can understand and be relevant to the "new and unexpected."

A second source of crisis is to be found in the awareness of inner contradictions. None of us ever achieves complete consistency, but one of the demands of our faith is that there be a reasonably high degree of correlation between our ideals and our practices. History shows us that it is entirely possible for men to hold very high ideals and at the same time to participate in practices which contradict these ideals — all without being aware of the contradiction. As long as one has no awareness of the contradiction, he can go peacefully along with both the ideal and the practice.

However the awareness of an inner contradiction, is almost sure to produce a serious crisis. In his novel *THE CRISIS*, the American novelist Winston Churchill describes the experience of an American family of slave-owners at the middle of the 19th century. There came a time in the experience of the family when they realized the deep contradiction between their ideals and their practice – and the result was the "crisis." What Churchill described in his novel, the entire North American republic lived out in the crisis of the Civil War. The founding fathers of the United States affirmed that "all men were created equal and that they were endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights..." I think that it may be safely said that the men responsible for these words were sincere men. Yet they permitted, and in some cases participated in the institution of slavery. It was many decades later that Lincoln, in his senatorial campaign of 1858 described the crisis of America as being one in which it would have to be seen whether a nation so conceived and so dedicated could long endure, half free and half slave. The contradiction had become a recognized fact – it had risen to the level of consciousness. No longer could men continue to affirm the equality of men and participate or condone slavery – the day of crisis had arrived. Ideals and practice could no longer be reconciled. There is no crisis quite as difficult or exacting as that which arises out of inner contradictions. Once the awareness of the contradiction becomes a reality – there is no further peace until the conflict is resolved. While situations are different in different countries and churches, it seems to this writer that a considerable part of our present missionary crisis grows out of our growing awareness of basic inner contradictions. In recent years, we have formally and publicly adopted very high missionary ideals: we are now fraternal workers, fellow workers with our national colleagues, we are brothers in a common family, and we have come to identify ourselves with a new culture and new way of life. But have we? How do our conditions of work compare with these national colleagues of ours? To what degree do we continue to judge adequate missionary support by USA standards? Are work funds equally available to all the staff of the church? Do all share in study opportunities? Does the missionary really come to feel the "pulse" of the country where he lives and works, reading its books and magazines, listening to its radio and television, following carefully the platforms of the various parties, and being in contact with the centers of life and power in that land? When our national colleagues criticize us, they often do so on the basis of our own ideals and theories and not on the basis of theirs. Thus we face another serious crisis – one of the awareness of many deep inner contradictions. Either of the crises would be serious – whether that which arises from radical and rapid change, or the other which arises from inner contradictions. But they have come upon us simultaneously. It is very important that we understand the magnitude and the urgency of this crisis in the vocation of the missionary.

The nature of the crisis makes it imperative that we give immediate attention to the problems and prompt response to the challenge. It, furthermore, requires a new degree of integrity, a new effort to seek re-

conciliation between principles and ideals, on the one hand, and practices and policies on the other. It requires a facing of the crisis in the vocation of the missionary and a response to the crisis in keeping with its magnitude, urgency and character.

V

Points of Departure in Rethinking The Role of the Missionary

Since the precise definition of the role of a missionary in Latin America today must necessarily vary from place to place, and even from person to person, it would seem advisable that we ask ourselves about the points of departure which ought to be used in the search for this definition. These elements are some of those which need to be uppermost in the mind of the missionary as he thinks about his task:

1) He must return again and again to the purposes of God and the mission of the church if his definition of his role is to have deep and enduring validity. With certain frequency, one hears the criticism of missionaries that so many are technicians, highly skilled in a given area and very useful to the work of the church — but quite unprepared to set their work within an adequate biblical and theological framework. Their motivation of Christian service is appreciated, as is the service itself. But one seems to detect the desire on the part of our national colleagues that our vocational consciousness be undergirded by fresh inquiries into the eternal purposes of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and by new examination of the essential mission of the church within the context of these purposes. Since the mission of the church is precisely that which gives meaning to the role of the Christian within the church, it is highly important that the missionary and the national study about and rethink the mission of the church in each of the countries. This common experience can go far toward the formulation of an adequate frame of reference for the definition of the role of the missionary.

2) He must have a deep appreciation for the importance of the autochthonous church. The implications of the doctrine of the incarnation are quite clear at this point. While the church is essentially the Body of Christ, and as such a supra-national and supra-cultural entity, it nevertheless remains true that the Gospel must become flesh and blood in every people and every culture. In the consultation recently held in Recife, Brazil, the Rev. Almir dos Santos gave the opening address for the study of the relationship of the church to present Brazilian life. In

this address, he stressed three things as characterizing modern Brazil: the rejection of the present *status quo*, the struggle against underdevelopment and the affirmation of the Brazilian personality through self-determination and nationalism. This is the mood of Latin America today! The church must become an integral part of the life of each of these republics and its right to be heard must be demonstrated constantly. This means that the Protestant church must reiterate its compatibility with Latin culture. For the missionary, it means a deep obligation to become steeped in this culture. This requires a life-time discipline in the choice of books, newspapers, magazines and contacts with the cultural life of the country. It means that we must reaffirm the Latin origins of Protestantism. The missionary in Latin America should be devoted to the study of the reformation in France, Spain and Italy. He should make a special effort to familiarize himself with the writings of Calvin, Juan de Valdés and the other Latin writers of the 16th century. The study of the Spanish Reformers is a most important preparation for the interpretation of the Gospel in Latin America. Insofar as is possible, the missionary should be sufficiently informed of currents in modern Latin America to make full use of these writers in sermons, lectures and books. He must read Unamuno, Rojas, Mieggi, Gutiérrez Marín, Míguez Bonino and other writers of the present century who speak out of the Latin world. No effort should be spared to demonstrate the autochthonous character of the Protestant church in Latin America. The foreign missionary bears a special responsibility in this regard. He must not only seek to inform himself but should take every opportunity to encourage his Latin American colleagues to make creative contributions to the theology, liturgy, pedagogy and social witness of the Christian Church in Latin America. It may very well be that one of the important contributions of the present-day missionary is to relieve the talented Latin American leaders of some of their tasks that they may make this indispensable contribution toward the realization of a Protestant Church that is increasingly an authentic expression of the Gospel in the Latin American world.

3) The missionary must understand the importance of the relationship between unity and mission. Most Protestant missionaries in Latin American countries are from North America. Due to peculiar historical circumstances, the North American Protestant church is by far the most divided church in the world. Present generation North American Protestants can easily assume that this fragmentation is a "normal" or "natural" condition; and because of this assumption, we can so easily be blind to the tragedy and sin which are a part of these divisions. We quite easily fall into a pattern of thinking in which the several denominations are taken as the basic reality of the Christian Church and some eventual union of the churches will be the achievement of the ecumenical movement and the creation of a new reality on the basis of the present denominational reality. This would seem to be a misreading of the Scriptures. The fundamental unity of the Church of Jesus Christ is God-given and is the prior reality. Only as a denomination participates at all in this prior reality, can it claim to be a Church at all! Already, the Church of Jesus Christ on earth is intentionally, constitutionally and essentially one. The author of the Letter to the Ephesians states categorically that the purpose of God is to unite all

things in heaven and earth in Christ. The mission of the Church is to be an instrument of this "uniting of all things" and therefore the Church itself must be ONE in its witness to the "uniting" purpose of God. Unity and mission belong together in Holy Scripture. The missionary, who represents the "mission" of the church in its world expression, must also become a faithful witness to the unity of the church. As representatives (in a sense) of the older churches, the missionaries must assume a special role in this search for greater unity. In humility but with firmness, they must see themselves as being "sent" by a *given older church*, but as being called to serve the whole Body of Christ in the country to which they are sent. While the missionary himself may continue to have a deep sense of indebtedness to the denomination which nurtured him and made possible his missionary ministry, he must feel a higher loyalty to his Lord and give, in his ministry, a true witness to his belief in the One, Holy, Apostolic, Universal Church. This will call for a major reassessment of the work and policies of most missionaries and mission boards. It certainly casts new light on the role of the missionary in Latin America today.

4) He must see the special implications of the new social consciousness of the church in Latin America today. We have already touched briefly on this matter, but a reiteration here seems to be entirely justified. When the task of the church was thought of as being primarily or almost exclusively the individual gospel for the salvation of individual men, then the missionary could speak to the national as man to man. The difference in nationality could be largely transcended. But today we live in a new age. The extreme individualism of the 18th and 19th centuries has yielded to a new recognition of the just claims of society. Varying degrees of collectivism have appeared throughout the decades of this century — many of these appearances have obviously come as correctives of the extreme, or rugged individualism of the previous century. But with this new accent on society, the Church has come to a redefinition of her mission in the world and new dimensions of the gospel are being discovered and proclaimed. The basic social entities today are the nations — nations that have their own history, culture, heroes, problems and aspirations. This is the basic unit and one can work effectively only from within the unit — never from without. Only as a member of the group, can one speak with authority about the group life. In this situation, the foreigner is extremely limited in his effectiveness, not only in the positions which he can hold, but in the influence he can exert. At this particular juncture in our history, it is not easy to define the precise role of the foreigner within the collective life of a Latin American nation and certainly sweeping generalities are uncalled for. But the missionary must take this new situation very seriously as he seeks for a redefinition of his peculiar role in the church. He must, at this juncture, look to his national colleagues for guidance and decision concerning the limitation which this situation places upon his ministry.

5) Finally, the missionary must face the fact of revolution as the overwhelming reality of Latin American life today. The radical, rapid changes in the structures of our society amount to a real, powerful and vibrant reality. Insofar as a society is "open," these changes usually take place peacefully; but insofar as they are "closed" societies, the changes can

be expected to take place violently. Latin America will probably have some of both. The missionary must face this reality and try to understand it. While Rip Van Winkle slept through a revolution — in fiction — we certainly cannot sleep through the changes which are coming in Latin America. The missionary needs to give careful and constant thought to the implications of the gospel for a revolutionary age. We can find ample biblical basis for rejecting any use of religion to sanctify and preserve the status quo. Authentic Christianity must always be in tension with the present age and in deep dissatisfaction with the present conditions. We are called to be non-conformists. We are the heirs of those "who have turned the world upside down." We need to study again the full implications of the coming of the Spirit upon men, as this coming is described by Isaiah and reiterated by Jesus — "to preach good tidings to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, set at liberty the oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." It should be noted that the condition of the men described in this passage is such that they are dependent upon others — they are "victims" of their situation. But the effect of the coming of the Spirit is not simply to serve these needy people, but to effect a radical change in their circumstances. It is not a program of visitation to the captives — BUT RELEASE! Not a program of seeing-eye dogs for the blind — BUT RECOVERY OF SIGHT! Not a promise of pie-in-the-sky for the oppressed — BUT TO SET THEM AT LIBERTY. This is not social service — but *radical change* in the circumstance of men. It is a veritable revolution!

Latin America today awaits its revolution — and it is evident that the revolution is coming. The effect of such a current of history is polarizing — middle and moderate ground become untenable — and one finally must declare himself for or against it! Since the revolution seems irresistible and inevitable, some would give a counsel of resignation in the spirit of those who say "if you can't lick 'em, join 'em." There is evidently some pragmatic truth here. But the Christian has far nobler motives for adopting a revolutionary stand. He does so in the name of justice. He also does so because he believes that Jesus Christ is the Lord of history and that there is a providential purpose at work in history. By no means can we assume that all that is in the revolution is of God — but God surely is in the sweep of history, including the revolutionary sweep of history. It is not easy to search for and identify the evidences of the Hand of God in our contemporary history — but the signs of the times are before us and we dare not flee from an honest attempt to understand them. There are many such signs — but let us look briefly at one of the more obvious ones: the almost universal evidence of yearning and *hope for a new day*. This is perhaps the most impressive fact in Latin America today. We must remind ourselves that revolutions are powerful, not because men despair, but because they hope. Modern Latin Americans hope — they reject the present and look toward a better future. They feel that they are standing on the very portal of a new day — this is a hope that has a strange, messianic character: the kingdom is at hand! Since we are Christians — Messianists — we need to ask ourselves what it means to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah

in Latin America today. What does it mean to be a Christian — one who lives already in the new age? Can the Messiahship of Jesus be made meaningful today by the evangelical churches in Latin America? It would seem that if we are to be faithful to Jesus himself, then the answer is not so much a doctrinal polemic against false Messiahs, but the demonstration of the signs of the messianic age. When John the Baptist sent messengers to inquire whether Jesus was the genuine Messiah, he was not given a theologically abstract answer, but simply told the messengers to go and tell John "what they had seen." And what was it that they had seen which constituted the sign of the messianic age? They had seen a transformation — a revolution — in the condition of the oppressed, the lame, the blind, the poor, etc. The messianic age did not dawn in Galilee in the "orthodox" way in which it was expected — it was not announced nor issued in by the ecclesiastical authorities of the synagogue. It did not dawn with servile obedience to custom or tradition. It came in a way that was not expected — from a source which the theologians could not recognize as authentic. Yet at this perspective of history in the 20th century, we calmly point to that simple Galilean and say: "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." Are we also adept at understanding the distant ages, as did the Pharisees, but are unable to read the signs of our times? Our day calls for the search for new insights into the workings of God in history, and a fresh approach to the mission of the church as she is called to stand amid the currents, the mighty currents of history, and be a witness — pointing to the mighty works of the hand of God as He holds the destiny of the whole world and works out his purposes in history. What is the role of the "missionary" in such a day? It is but to be a "witness" to the work of God — in Jesus Christ, both in ancient times and in the eternal present.

These would seem to be five of the points of departure from which we can seek anew the definition of the role of the missionary. No attempt has been made here to point to the full implications of these perspectives — but only to suggest something of the possibility in the rethinking of the missionary vocation in the light of these situations.

Conclusion:

*Only the Receiving Church
Can Define the Role*

The situation today is such that the final answer to our question can only be given by the younger church that receives the missionary. This is exactly what happens in the exchange of workers among the older churches — and it is what must increasingly happen on the so-called mis-

sion fields. Since the role of the missionary can only be defined in terms of the mission of the church, then the logic of the situation is that he share with the national church in a re-examination of its mission and then allow that church to define his peculiar role in the achievement of the mission. This may well lead to new policies by which the younger church will "call" the foreign worker, rather than "receive" the one who is sent to them. It can well lead to the policy of having the national church share in the fixing of salaries and handling of work-funds, and it surely will lead to complete freedom in the younger church for the placement of all of its workers, and in the expenditure of all of the funds available for the total program of the church. The voice of the younger churches will thus become the key-note to the use of all resources within the given country. This will ultimately lead to the internationalization of our agencies which serve in the exchange of personnel from country to country.

As we move further in this direction, the missionary (foreign worker) will be far less a representative of a given country and sent by the church of a specific nation — he will achieve a new status as a kind of international Christian worker — a servant of the world church. The ambassador of one nation who goes to another nation may prove to be a good ambassador, he may understand the people and the culture and be a faithful interpreter of one people to another. But the diplomat on the staff of the United Nations stands in a different relationship. Regardless of the country of his birth, his representation and his interests are universal. Both the ambassador and the U.N. diplomat may be equally interested in progress, justice and improvement. But their roles are not the same — and neither of the roles is that of the political leader of the country where they serve. They are always working under limitations and can ultimately do only that which the host country specifies and requests. The illustration is only a useful analogy and cannot be pushed in all of its parts. Its value lies primarily in the fact that we are living in an age of national autonomy, and in an age in which the spirit of nationalism is rising. While the church is universal in its ontological nature, the community of Christians exists in particular nations with particular cultures. These several national communities of Christians — national churches — are not isolated from the strong currents of nationalist sentiment and their leaders do not reject this sentiment as being entirely evil, but share it in all of its positive qualities. When the foreign clergyman — missionary — becomes a part of this new community, he will come under its guidance and protection — and its control. The specific role which he should play can only be defined by that national church. Efforts on the part of another national church, or on behalf of the missionary himself, to impose any other definition — under present and probable future circumstances — can only lead to disaster. The specific obligation of the mission board and of the missionaries is to remove as far as possible all sources of tensions and pressures, identify clearly and remove these problems, and thus create the kind of relationship in which the role of the missionary can be redefined, enriched and enhanced through the years for the greater Glory of Him whose witnesses have been called to go to the ends of the earth.

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